

OCCULT NAZI PARTY



Guido von List, born in 1848 as the son of a dealer in leather goods, had acquired his Nordic obsessions while still a child and as early as 1862, when he was only fourteen years old, he had stood in front of the altar in the crypt of St. Stephen's Cathedral, solemnly renounced his Catholic faith, and sworn that one day he would build a Temple to Wotan.

The romanticism was found so emotionally satisfying by von List and a few like-minded friends that they ultimately developed it into a private religion of full-blooded paganism, complete with sun festivals at the equinoxes and the solstices, rather similar to that advocated by the Pagan Front. In 1875, for example, von List and his associates celebrated the summer solstice on a hilltop near Vienna, enjoying a "fraternal feast", following this with a simple ritual in which they adored the Sun as "Baldur incarnate" (Baldur was, of course, the slain-and-risen god of Nordic mythology) and, finally, burying eight (empty?) wine bottles carefully laid out in the pattern of the swastika.

This last episode is of some interest, for it would appear to mark the first association of the swastika - until the present century usually referred to as the "fylfot cross" - with Germanic racialism and neo-paganism and it is significant that the badge and flag of the Nazi Party were designed by a disciple of von List who, like his occult teacher, believed that the runic equivalent of the letter G was a disguised swastika and quoted the Edda to prove that the symbol had a secret significance for the ancient Germanic peoples.

While the use of the swastika as a decorative motif has been widespread (it can be found, for example, on archaic Greek pottery), it is not known from where von List first acquired his knowledge of, and admiration for, it as an esoteric symbol. It cannot have been from Theosophical literature, for Madame Blavatsky did not adopt it as an emblem of her movement until two years after von List had held his hilltop celebration and, in any case, it was not until the late 1880s that the writings of the Russian "Priestess of Isis" began to be translated into German. I would surmise that it was derived - curiously enough for a self-confessed pagan - from von List's examination of, and meditations upon, the stained-glass windows of mediaeval churches. For, like his English contemporary the Rev. W.A. Ayton, a Theosophical clergyman who held that Gladstone was an agent of the Jesuits, von List believed that the mediaeval mural painters and stained-glass designers had all been alchemists and magicians, incorporating occult teachings, under the veil of symbolism, into all their work. It is worth adding that at the present day such eccentric theories are still commonly held by those who participate in the intellectual underworld of occultism and that the thesis of "Fulcanelli" ('The Mystery of the Cathedrals', Fulcanelli's magnum opus, is now available in an English translation. Its supposed author probably never existed and I think it very likely that the book was actually written by Julien Champagne, an absinthe-addicted artist and occultist who purported to teach alchemy), who argued that the architectural details of almost all Gothic ecclesiastical buildings were intended to convey alchemical secrets, is beginning to enjoy a widespread acceptance among those inclined to alchemical and magical

studies.

After the death of his father in 1877 von List was forced to earn a living as a journalist and playwright, for while he was supposed to be eventually going to inherit the family business, his mother had been left a life interest in it - in fact she so badly mismanaged it that when her son eventually came to claim his inheritance he found it to be valueless.

While von List was not particularly successful as either playwright or journalist, his Germanic mysticism had a strong appeal for a number of occultists and after the publication of his first major work, 'German Mythological Landscapes' (1891), he acquired a small band of followers, some of them wealthy, to whom he lectured frequently and at length. In 1908 these disciples formed the Guido von List Society with the object of publishing von List's books and publicizing his "Arminian ideology".

The secretary of the Guido von List Society was Johannes Baltzli, a disciple of Madame Blavatsky and, for a time, editor of the Theosophical magazine, 'Prana'. The owner of 'Prana' was Franz Hartmann, an old acquaintance of Blavatsky - for a time he lived with her and Olcott in India - and a dubious character; his fellow Theosophists nicknamed him "dirty Franz" on account of his greasy appearance; he was one of the leaders of a pseudo-masonic, fee-snatching organization called Memphis and Misraim, and he was deeply involved in sex-magic. He seems to have been impressed by von List's ideology, was an honorary member of the Guido von List Society, and allowed Baltzli to use 'Prana' as a medium for the expression of von List's "Arminian ideology".

Arminian ideology, expounded in great detail in such soporific treatises as 'The Secret of the Runes' (1908), 'The Rites of the Ario-Germans', published in the same year, and 'The Transition from Wotanism to Christianity' (1911), was a "traditional" occult system which von List had derived from his admiration for the Herminones, a tall, blond, blue-eyed race of Nordic heroes described by the classical writer Tacitus in his 'Germania'. It seems likely that Tacitus's flattering opinions on the Germanic tribes and their heroic virtues is comparable with the eighteenth-century cult of the "noble savage"; certainly both patterns of belief seem to have originated in the tendency of urban man to seek a never-never land of simple and "natural" morality in areas beyond the frontiers of civilization.

It was believed by von List that from the Herminones had been derived a secret society of German magicians called the Armanen which had survived into modern times and of which he himself claimed to be the last surviving member. This brotherhood, von List supposed, had left philological traces of its Temples and "High Places" in the names of hills, rivers and villages. ...Von List's derivation of the word

"hieroglyph" [came] from the Runic ir-og-liff.

The Armanen had left their traces not only in place-names but in much of German mystical literature, for such writers as Meister Eckhart, Paracelsus and Boehme had been initiates of the society and their books had been written in a secret code meaningless to all save their fellow Armanen.

The most important of those who played a part in spreading von List's ideas in Germany was Alfred Schuler (1865-1923), an occultist who made a great impact on his contemporaries in spite of the fact that he never published anything save an occasional article and a little poetry.

Schuler was a practising magician; he made an attempt to cure Nietzsche's madness by conducting an ancient Roman ritual and, on another occasion, attempted at a seance to get the soul of the poet Stefan George "possessed by cosmic fire".

Schuler lectured on von List's ideas in both Dresden and Munich. One such series of lectures, given in 1922 at the Munich home of a certain Frau Bruckmann, is of particular interest. For Frau Bruckmann, a member of a Munich publishing family, was one of the wealthy women who "took up" Hitler and enjoyed a quasi-sexual emotional relationship with him of an intensity that made her jealous of his relationships with other women.

"One day (said Hitler) I detected an unexpected reaction even in Frau Bruckmann. She had invited to her house, at the same time as myself, a very pretty woman of Munich society. As we were taking our leave, Frau Bruckmann perceived in her female guest's manner a sign of interest that she doubtless deemed untimely. The consequence was that she never again invited us both at once. As I've said, the woman was beautiful, and perhaps she felt some interest in me - nothing more."

Whatever the exact nature of Frau Bruckmann's jealousy, there is no doubt that she extended her friendship to Hitler, that the future Fuhrer was a frequent guest at her house during the year 1922, and that it is perfectly possible that he attended at least some of Schuler's lectures.

The German Order (Germanenorden) and the Thule Society were secret societies whose members practised a Nordic occult[ism] intended to counter the machinations of "Jewish" Freemasonry.

The history of the German Order is of real importance, for not only did some of its initiates play prominent parts in the events associated with the early development of the Nazi Party but its anti-Semitic propaganda did much to create the intellectual climate which made possible Hitler's rise to power.

The official foundation of the German Order took place at a conference held at Leipzig over the Whitsun holiday of 1912. It is certain, however, that for some months previous to this date the Order had already enjoyed an underground existence.

The best known of the founders of the German Order was Theodor Fritsch, the wealthy publisher of a highly profitable trade journal called the German Miller. Fritsch was both virulently anti-Jewish and anti-Marxist - he viewed socialism as a totally un-Aryan ideology - and in 1902 he founded the 'Hammer', a periodical devoted to what was described as "scientific anti-Semitism".

The 'Hammer' enjoyed a readership which, although small, was fanatically devoted to the ideas expressed in it. As years passed these readers began to informally associate themselves together in local groups for the purpose of extending the circulation of the 'Hammer' and opposing Jewish penetration of commerce and the professions. In 1910 most of these groups joined with one another to form the German Hammer League, a loose federation which seems to have been somewhat ineffective as a vehicle for anti-Semitic propaganda - certainly it made no great impact upon either the nationalistically inclined middle class or the industrial workers whom Fritsch passionately desired to wean away from their growing infatuation with the arid Marxism of Karl Kautsky and the Social Democratic Party.

In his desire to create a nationalist proletariat, Fritsch was a forerunner of National Socialism. After his death in 1933 he was acknowledged as such, the Nazi press referring to him as "the old Teacher".

At the Reichstag elections of January 1912 the Social Democrats made massive electoral gains. To anti-Semitic nationalists both this Marxist advance and two concurrent international crises, one in the Balkans, the other in North Africa, seemed to threaten the very existence of Imperial Germany. Amongst those who took alarm was a certain Heinrich Class who, under the pseudonym of Daniel Frymann, published a book entitled 'If I Were Kaiser' in which he advocated an Imperial dictatorship, the dissolution of all trade unions and political parties, and the enactment of anti-Semitic legislation which would ensure a "Germany of the Germans".

Class's book reached a surprisingly large readership and favorably impressed Fritsch who published an enthusiastic review of it in the 'Hammer'. Germans who loved their country and were of unblemished Aryan descent must, said Fritsch, unite together in order to make possible the transformation of the German state on the lines advocated by Class.

There was some favorable response to this call for action and at the Leipzig conference of Whitsun 1912 two organizations, the Reichshammerbund and the German Order, came into formal existence.

The first named of these, a much less secretive group than the German Order, was led by a certain Colonel Hellwig - his official title was Bundeswart - whose deputy was Hermann Pohl. Hellwig and Pohl were assisted in their administration of the Reichshammerbund by an executive of twelve members known as the Armanen-Rat. This reference to the Armanen was a significant indication of the influence of the occult ideology of Guido von List upon the members of the Hammerbund - it will be remembered that the Armanen were the secret brotherhood of Teutonic magicians whose last representative von List claimed to be. Similar occult influences were apparent in an extraordinary article published Fritsch in a November 1912 issue of the 'Hammer'. In this Fritsch called for a violent counter-attack against what he called "the hate of the Tschandala". He boasted that the leaders of the Tschandala would be destroyed; "not even", he wrote, "flight abroad shall protect them. As soon as the bonds of civic order lie broken upon the ground and law is trodden underfoot, the Holy Vehm enters upon its rights; it must not fear to smite the mass criminals with their own weapons."

The Reichshammerbund achieved only a very modest success; in spite of the publication of hundreds of thousands of leaflets and their distribution to workers, peasants, army officers, and university students, by June 1913 there were still only nineteen local branches of the organization. Some of these were very small indeed; that of Nuremberg, for example, had under thirty members. Nevertheless, the intellectual influence exerted by the Reichshammerbund upon its members was considerable, and some of them were later to achieve political prominence and to obtain a national platform for the ideology they had derived from Fritsch. Thus Alfred Roth, who led the Hamburg branch of the organization and became its national leader after the death of its first Bundeswart, Colonel Hellwig, in early 1914, was to become the founder and chief of the Schutz-und Trutzbund, a national association which in the years immediately following upon the defeat of November 1918 achieved a huge membership and did much to restore the shattered morale of the nationalistic middle class.

Pohl was not only the second-in-command of the Reichsmahherbind but was the founder and first Chancellor of the German Order. This latter solidarity had arisen out of a circular urging the

establishment of Aryan occult lodges which Pohl had sent out in November 1911 "to fifty loyal persons in the Reich and Austria". Although the Austrian and Bavarian response to this circular was somewhat poor, in general it seems to have met with a surprisingly good reception, receiving thirty-seven favorable replies.

Pohl envisaged his Order as a Teutonic counter-Freemasonry complete with a secret membership, an impressive set of rituals, and an inner doctrine revealed only to initiates. In the German Federal Archives survives the only known copy of an initiation ritual of the German Order. While the ceremony seems excessively romantic, it must have been impressive in performance. The actual initiation was conducted by the Master of the Lodge and two assistants, all three clad in white robes and wearing horned Viking helmets upon their heads. The Master bore a ceremonial lance, "the Spear of Wotan", while his assistants wore swords. The members of the Lodge, also robed, entered singing the 'Pilgrims' Chorus' from Wagner's 'Tannhauser' and the would-be initiate was led in hoodwinked and dressed as a pilgrim. He then suffered a long lecture from the Master, who informed him that he was separated from such inferior racial elements as the Jews by "our Ario-Germanic concept of the world and life". After the lighting of a "sacred torch", the hoodwink was removed and the candidate consecrated with the Spear of Wotan and the swords of the assistant initiators. (For a fuller description of this rite, see p. 1082 of the occult encyclopedia 'Man, Myth, and Magic'.)

Phillip Stauff, a national journalist, was a prominent member of both the German Order and the Guido von List Society, as were Eberhard von Brockhusen, a Pomeranian landowner who was on terms of personal friendship with von List, and Bernhard Koerner. The latter was a member of the Prussian College of Heralds and extended von List's theory that the exterior beams of mediaeval houses had an occult runic significance to ancient Germanic coats-of-arms which, so he asserted, incorporated secret symbols designed to convey occult knowledge.

The outbreak of the World War in August 1914 led to semi-cessation of the Order's activities; in November Pohl wrote a letter to Julius Ruttiger, a front-line soldier who had previously been Master of the Order's Nuremberg Lodge, complaining that the Order's financial circumstances were difficult and that almost half the initiate were in uniform. "The war on us too early," he wrote, "the German Order was not yet fully organized and crystallized and if the war lasts long it will go to pieces."

Throughout its brief life the German Order had been afflicted with a certain amount of internal bickering and in late 1915 or early in the following year Pohl was deprived of his office of Chancellor. He was not the sort of man to be content with a subordinate position in a society which he himself had founded and in August 1916 he left the Order and in cooperation with G.W. Freese, formerly Master of the Order's

Berlin Lodge, established a breakaway movement, the German Order Walvater of the Holy Graal.

The rump of the original German Order carried on its activities under the leadership of the anti-Semitic journalist Phillip Stauff, who, it is clear, was almost completely ineffective in his administration functions. Stauff would appear to have used the cover-name of Skalden-Orden for at least some of his branches, but there cannot have been a great many of these, for during the years 1916-20 this sect of the German Order was almost dormant, enjoying only a shadowy existence.

The German Order Walvater of Pohl, who saw the upsurge of wartime patriotism as an opportunity to build a powerful, ultra-nationalistic movement devoted to Teutonic occultism, was altogether more active and advertised in the right-wing press the existence of a "German Lodge" open to "German-blooded serious men of pure character". Applications for initiation were invited, the primary qualification for membership being racial purity. A would-be member had to produce details on such obscure aspects of his personal appearance as the amount of hair on various parts of his body and to supply the Order with "an imprint of the sole of his foot upon a sheet of paper." This last peculiar requirement can only have arisen out of some eccentric extension of the traditional occult art of palmistry.

About the time Pohl founded his schismatic Order he came into contact with an individual who called himself Rudolf Freiherr (i.e. Baron) von Sebottendorff. In spite of this aristocratic nomenclature the individual in question was an astrologer and adventurer whose real name was Adam Alfred Rudolf Glauer. He seems to have genuinely believed in this Teutonic variation of traditional lore and his 'History of Astrology', published in 1923, reveals his admiration of Guido von List and Lanz von Liebenfels.

Hermann Pohl and his fellow-chiefs of the German Order Walvater seem to have been impressed by Sebottendorff's combination of burning patriotism and occult learning and, at around Christmas 1917, they appointed him Grand Master of the Order's Bavarian Province. He moved to Munich where, in January 1918, he established a periodical called 'Runen' devoted to mysticism, dubious history, and anti-Semitic diatribes. He was aided in his efforts by an art student named Walter Nauhaus, a former front-line soldier who had been invalided out of the army, was already a member of the German Order Walvater, and headed a Nordic study circle called the Thule Society. The possibilities of the Thule Society, both as a recruiting organization for the Order, a net to trap gudgeons, and as a useful front to hide particularly secret activities, were rapidly discerned by Sebottendorff and he came to an informal agreement with Nauhaus. He himself was to direct the German Order Walvater, while Nauhaus was to concentrate upon the Thule Society, particularly striving to recruit younger members into its ranks. Should such new entrants prove suitable they would, of course, be initiated into the German Order

itself. In any case the political and religious orientation of the Thule Society was apparent from its arms - a curved swastika with sword and wreath.

This arrangement appears to have been reasonably successful and by August 1918 the finances of the Bavarian Province were sufficiently healthy for a permanent headquarters to be established in rooms rented from a Munich hotel. These were dedicated at a ceremony which took place on 17 August and was conducted by G.W. Freese of Berlin, Sebottendorff, and Hermann Pohl himself. On the same day some thirty individuals were initiated into the Order.

A month earlier a more important event had taken place; Sebottendorff had bought a publishing firm and with it an almost bankrupt newspaper. The publishing house was the Franz Eher Verlag; Eher had died in June and, upon his death, the newspaper which has existed since 1868 had temporarily ceased publication. Sebottendorff revived it, changing its name to the Munchener Beobachter und Sportblatt and filling its pages with a strange blend of anti-Semitism and horse-racing tips. Such a journalistic mixture might have been seen as a recipe for disaster. Nevertheless the paper survived. Under the name of the Volkischer Beobachter it was to achieve worldwide notoriety as the official journal of the Nazi Party, the authentic voice of the Third Reich.

"The seven Thule members did not die as hostages, they were murdered because they were anti-Semites. They died for the swastika, they were sacrificed for Judah, they were murdered because some individual wanted to destroy the beginnings of the national revival." -Rudolf von Sebottendorff

From the summer of 1918 the distinction between the Bavarian province of the German Order Walvater and the Thule Society became blurred - indeed, there is some evidence that they formally amalgamated in the spring of the following year. In order to avoid confusion the two societies are henceforward referred to as "Thule" and their members and close associates "Thulists". Strikes, mutinies, and left-wing demonstrations spread throughout the country. On 7 November Kurt Eisner and a coalition of Independent and Majority socialists overthrew the Bavarian monarchy and three days later the Kaiser, to whom the Bavarian king had been subordinate, abdicated and fled to Holland. On the next day, 11 November, the new republican government in Berlin, led by Ebert and Schneidemann, concluded an armistice with the Western powers. Soldiers' and Workers' Councils (Soviets) sprang up in every major city.

The Thulists regarded all these events with utter dismay; the Tschandala, that sinister alliance of Jews and Marxists, was coming into the open, was seizing control of the machinery of state and industry.

Soon, one could be sure, they would put into effect their loathsome plans for the enslavement of Nordic man! At a Thule meeting held on 9 November Sebottendorff issued a call for counter-revolution, for armed struggle against the forces of "Judah". "This is," said Sebottendorff, "a revolution made by a lower race to corrupt Germans. In place of our blood-related princes we are now governed by our mortal enemy - Judah. From now on it must be an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

Over the following weeks Sebottendorff's Beobachter ran article after article which, while never openly calling for military action against either the local or national republican governments, were designed to create an atmosphere in which the triumph of counter-revolution would become politically inevitable.

Sebottendorff and his Thulist fellows were particularly concerned about the psychological state of the Bavarian working class. Unquestionably their minds were being poisoned by the Jewish-Marxist virus! Equally unquestionably the old-fashioned patriotism represented by the bourgeois political parties no longer had any appeal for those who followed the "racially inferior" leaders of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. What was needed, decided Sebottendorff, was a "workers' ring" designed to spread the Thulist ideology amongst the industrial proletariat. He decided that the man to lead this "ring" was Karl Harrer, a Thulist who had shown some interest in the everyday problems of working-class life and was by profession a sports reporter on a conservative evening journal, and assigned him to the task.

The workers' ring - formally the Politischer Arbeiterzirkel, the Workers' Political Circle - was founded in November 1918 and met at least once a week to hear lectures, usually given by Harrer himself, on such subjects as 'The Origins of the War' and 'The Jews, Germany's Greatest Enemies'. Attendance at such lectures was often small; sometimes the only people present, save for Harrer himself, were Anton Drexler (a locksmith) and one or two of his workmates.

It soon became apparent that activities on such a limited scale could not continue forever, that if the Circle was to be an effective weapon against the "Judaean-Bolsheviks" it must seek a wider audience, must try to extend itself into the rough world of political public meetings, rallies and demonstrations. On 5 January 1919 the leaders of the Circle - Harrer, Drexler and another railway worker, Michael Lotter, who acted as the Circle's secretary - held a meeting at which they united with the forty or so members of a "Committee of Independent Workers", founded by Drexler in the previous March, to form the German Workers' Party (Deutsche Arbeiterpartei - DAP).

Drexler is usually credited with being the real founder of the new party, but over fourteen years after the event a Thulist named Franz Dannehl claimed that the DAP had come into existence as a direct

consequence of a conversation between Harrer and himself at a Thule meeting. There is no good reason to reject this version of events, for it is known that Drexler inscribed a presentation copy of his autobiographical pamphlet 'My Political Awakening' to Karl Harrer as "the founder of the Deutsche Arbeiterpartei".

Why is the question of any importance? Because a year or eighteen months later it prefixed the descriptive phrase "National Socialist" to its name and became the NSDAP, better known as the Nazi Party.

In the months preceding the infant party's change of name Munich had undergone a series of exciting - and totally unpleasant - experiences; they included several abortive right-wing plots against Eisner's government, Soviet revolution, Red Terror, a siege, and White counter-revolution. In all these events Sebottendorff and the Thule Society played a major part. Indeed it would not be going too far to say that it was the martyrdom, real or supposed, of several Thulists at the hands of Communist revolutionaries that so changed the climate of Bavarian opinion that it became possible for the tiny party of Drexler and Harrer to grow into a mass movement.

Sebottendorff and his associates were directly involved in two of the above-mentioned plots; a somewhat farcical attempt to kidnap Eisner in the course of a political meeting at Bad Aibling, and a more serious plan to use the Burgerwehr, a middle-class law-and-order group, as a counter-revolutionary military shock-force. The latter plot was betrayed by an informer, a paid agent of both the Bavarian government and the Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, and, as a consequence of the betrayal, J.F. Lehmann, a nationalist publisher who had been the most active of the conspirators, was imprisoned.

On 21 February Kurt Eisner was murdered by Count Arco-Valley, a young officer whose motives were partly political - he was a monarchist and regarded all republicans, particularly socialist ones, with the utmost loathing - and partly personal - he had been refused admittance to the Thule Society on the ground that he was of partly Jewish blood and wanted to redeem himself in the eyes of the Thulists by carrying out "a thoroughly Teutonic deed".

This event drew the attention of the Munich Soviet (i.e. the Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies) to the Thule Society and, consequently, its rooms were raided. Somehow or other, however, Sebottendorff managed to convince the Soviet that the Thule was nothing more than a society of antiquarians and, indeed, he went so far as to formally register it as such.

Meanwhile the Thule Society and its allies had been actively working for the overthrow of the Soviet; they had hated Eisner, they still hated Hoffmann, but they hated the Jewish author Ernst Toller, Chairman of the Anarchist Soviet, still more. They sent spies into left-wing groups, they smuggled out of Munich those who wished to join the forces gathering at Bamberg in preparation for a military advance on the city, they offered the services of their fighting organization, the Thule Kampfbund, formed the previous winter, to Alfred von Seyffertitz, a moderate republican who was planning an anti-Soviet rising, and they engaged, very discreetly, in anti-Semitic propaganda.

Tarnhari (who was either mad, fraudulent or, as he himself claimed, the miraculously born reincarnation of the chief of the ancient Teutonic tribe of the Volsungen) was a friend and follower of Guido von List, sharing the Austrian magician's hatred of Jewry and belief in the importance of the mysterious Armanen. He had originally made the acquaintance of von List by approaching him with details of his memories of his previous life as an ancient German chieftan; von List accepted him completely - his amazing recollections confirmed von List's own theories. Like von List, Tarnhari used the swastika as his symbol. He issued a magazine called the 'Swastika Letter' (the usual mixture of occultism, Nordic pre-history, denunciations of Judah and emotional appeals for "thinking with blood") from Leipzig and supported himself by selling small stickers, designed to be stuck on letters, engraved with runic symbols and pictures of Nordic gods and heroes.

Sebottendorff, in co-operation with Bernhard Stempfle, prepared a memorandum for the Hoffmann government urging the raising of a Free Corps to overthrow the Soviets. His proposals were accepted.

The Free Corps selected was from Thuringia, but its ranks were augmented by numerous Bavarians brought in by Sebottendorff who had opened a recruiting office at the Hotel Deutscher Kaiser in Nuremberg. Together with regular army units the Free Corps laid siege to Munich, hoping to starve the Soviets into surrender rather than take the city by storm.

Meanwhile, in Munich, the Soviet leaders had at last realized that the Thule Society was no antiquarian association, but a dedicated group of counter-revolutionaries actively engaging in smuggling out of the city individuals who wished to join the besieging forces. On 26 April communist soldiers raided the Thule headquarters, seizing both a Thulist they found on the premises and a list of the society's members. The latter enabled them to subsequently carry out another six arrests. According to Nazi and other extreme right-wing sources those arrested were both innocent and humble; in the 'Memoirs' which he wrote under the shadow of the gallows, Alfred Rosenberg claim that they were:

"selected from the Organization Thule which devoted its attention to early Germanic history opposed Jewry without, however, being politically active. The secretary of the organization held a small position in the Post Office. All little people. Not one capitalist."

On 30 April the communist Red Guards received reports that twenty unarmed communist medical orderlies who had been captured by the besiegers at Starnberg had been shot after a drumhead court martial. A proclamation was immediately issued:

"Workers! Soldiers of the Red Army! The enemy is at the gates. The officers, students, and White Guard mercenaries are already at Schleissheim. Protect the revolution! Every man to arms! Everything is at stake. At Starnberg the White Guard dogs murdered twenty of our medical orderlies they had taken prisoner."

This denunciation of the "White Guard dogs" had an inflammatory effect. The soldiers of the 1st Infantry Regiment demanded, as reprisal, the murder of five middle-class hostages for every executed communist prisoner and the commander of the Soviet forces gave his assent to this proposal. One by one the seven Thulists, two captured White calvarymen, and the aged Professor Ernst Berger, who had been imprisoned for making rude remarks about a Soviet proclamation, were placed against a wall and shot.

Shocked by the atrocities, the commanders of the White forces decided to make an immediate frontal assault on the city. On the following day, 1 May, they fought their way into Munich where they found, somewhat to their surprise, that the Thulists and other counter-revolutionaries had already launched a widespread rising and had succeeded in gaining control of the war ministry, the royal palace and other key positions. By the morning of 2 May all Munich save for the railway station, which remained under communist control until the following day, had been occupied by the counter-revolutionary forces.

By the evening of 5 May over two hundred Communists and supposed Communists had been executed (the latter group included twenty members of a Catholic working-men's guild whom the White soldiery bayoneted to death without even the most rudimentary court martial).

The overthrow of the Munich Soviet nominally restored the authority of Hoffmann and his social

democratic colleagues; in reality, however, they were political prisoners of the White military forces, ruling only in so far as they did not step outside the limits imposed on them. The forces of the extreme right were favored by the army commanders and were provided with financial subsidies paid from the secret funds of a nominally socialist government.

Von Sebottendorff did not share in this official approval; both the army and a majority of Thulists blamed him for the carelessness which had resulted in the Thule membership lists falling into the hands of the Reds and his influence became minimal save over the 'Beobachter' in which his sister, Frau Kunze, was the majority shareholder until December 1920. Sebottendorff, on the other hand, claimed that it was Friedrich Knauf, commander of the Thule Kampfbund, who was culpable for this unfortunate happening. The Thule, however, not only survived von Sebottendorff's departure but enjoyed an influx of new members, amongst them Hans Frank, a young lawyer who twenty years later was to earn worldwide notoriety as the bloody-minded Governor-General of occupied Poland.

The 'Beobachter' was not at first a purely Nazi paper; it set out to be "above the parties", to be the voice of all racist and ultra-nationalist groups. Its particular favorite was the German Socialist Party, founded in the winter of 1918-19 by Alfred Brunner and Heinrich Kraeger. The latter was member of the German Order, which, coupled with the fact that in 1919 and 1920 the German Socialist Party attracted far more support outside Bavaria than did the Nazis, probably accounted for the favoritism displayed by the 'Beobachter'.

In October 1919 the paper carried its first report of a speech by "Herr Hitler of the DAP". At the time the future Fuhrer was still a soldier and had been a member of the Party for only a little over a month.

According to August Kubizek, a friend of the young Hitler, his interests included oriental religion, astrology, yoga, hypnotism, and other aspects of occultism. There is no reason to question the truth of his story, for Hitler's conversation, as recorded in both Rauschning's 'Voice of Destruction' and the later 'Table Talk', revealed a detailed knowledge of occult theory. Another account of the young Hitler's interest in mysticism and magic that cannot be altogether rejected is that given by the anthroposophist Dr. Walter Stein and recorded in Trevor Ravenscroft's 'Spear of Destiny'.

Dr. Stein claimed that in the summer of 1912 he purchased a copy of a nineteenth-century edition of Wolfram von Eschenbach's 'Parsival', one of the mediaeval romances concerned with the quest of the Holy Grail. Inside the front page of the book was inscribed in a distinctive handwriting the name Adolf Hitler; the book was filled with marginal comments in the same handwriting and these revealed that

their author not only knew a great deal about such subjects as alchemy, mysticism, and mythology but was possessed of a strong belief in the importance of racial purity and a deep loathing of "Judah". Thus against a passage describing the attendance at High Mass of the Grail Knights was a note which read, "These men betrayed their pure Aryan Blood to the dirty superstitions of the Jew Jesus - superstitions as loathsome and ludicrous as the Yiddish rites of circumcision."

Intrigued by the character of the mysterious Hitler, especially with the combination of occult racist learning and pathological racism displayed in the marginal commentary, Stein asked the occult bookseller from whom he had acquired the copy of 'Parsival' whether he knew anything of its former owner. The bookseller, a disciple of Guido von List named Ernst Pretzsche, gave Stein the address at which Hitler was living, adding that he knew the young man well, had lent him books and money and had supplied him with an occasional meal.

Eventually Hitler and Walter Stein managed to strike up an acquaintanceship. According to Stein's account Hitler regarded him as a fellow occultist and confided to him the fact that he had made experiments with the supposedly mind-expanding substance anhalonium lewinii, a drug derived from a Mexican cactus. This seems a surprisingly early date for someone to have been using anhalonium; it is worth remembering, however, that the magician Aleister Crowley was using the drug as early as 1915-16, that the use of drugs as a method of gaining mystical experience was already something of a tradition in German occultism, that by 1928 the use of anhalonium was sufficiently widespread amongst German occultists for astrological almanacs to include advertisements stating where it might be obtained, and that Ernst Pretzsche, whom Walter Stein claimed had been Hitler's supplier of the drug, had supposedly lived in Mexico and still had contacts with that country. One is forced to conclude that Stein's story of Hitler's use of psychotropic drugs is by no means impossible.

By April [1919] Hitler had rejoined his regiment, now stationed in Munich. His feelings about Germany's "betrayal" were as bitter as ever, and he [was] selected by his Commanding Officer for a course of political instruction which ultimately resulted in his being made a V-man - an NCO on special assignment. In this capacity he was sent, on 12 September 1919, to report on a meeting of the DAP, the tiny party which had grown out of the political activities of the Thule Society.

Anton Drexler, the locksmith turned railwayman who, it will be remembered, was one of the founders of the DAP, was impressed by both Hitler's views and the uncompromising way in which he expressed them. He hurried after the future Fuhrer, presented him with a copy of 'My Political Awakening', an autobiographical pamphlet, and took details of his name and address. Or so it is to be presumed, for on the following day he sent Hitler a Party membership card and an invitation to take part in the work of

the Party's directing committee.

Herr Gutbarrlet, a professional physician and amateur astrologer, was an extremely early member of DAP - he had attended the meeting at which Hitler had made his first appearance - and had been an initiate of the Thule Society and an old associate of Sebottendorff, as well as being a shareholder, like the latter's sister, in the 'Beobachter'.

The forces of the Bavarian Right fell into three groups. First, there were the monarchists and particularists, those who desired a restoration of the House of Wittelsbach and an independent or, at any rate, autonomous Bavaria. Second there were the Nazis and the SA, the latter numbering about 2,000 men, and third, there were various military associations which had grown out of the Free Corps, the most notable of them being the Reichsflagge, with a political outlook derived from traditional German nationalism, and the Bund Oberland, a formation which had its origins in the Free Corps raised by Sebottendorff and the Thulists during the Bavarian Soviet Republic. The political loyalties of these latter groups were uncertain, but most of them enjoyed a loose attachment to the leadership of General Ludendorff, the man who had been a virtual dictator of Germany during the last stages of the war of 1914-18, who had taken refuge in Bavaria after the failure of the Kapp putsch, and who saw himself as a Teutonic mystic - he wanted to revive the worship of Wotan - and the prospective savior of the nation. Ludendorff's religious opinions seem to have developed out of the increasing influence of his secretary, a volkisch occultist who believed that her spirit enjoyed a mystic communion with the Nordic race-soul. Ludendorff's occult neo-paganism was something of a political liability in Bavaria, for it went with an anti-Catholicism of such intensity that it led him to regard the Jesuits, whom he once referred to as "the black plague", as little more than disguised Jews.

In February 1923 the SA, the Reichsflagge - which simultaneously changed its name to the Reichskriegsflagge and put itself under the political leadership of Rohm and Hitler - the Bund Oberland, the Lower Bavarian Struggle League, and the Munich Patriotic League united to form a military coalition, the Working Union of Patriotic Struggle Leagues.

This alliance gave Rohm, Ludendorff, and Hitler the military strength they wanted. With it, they felt, they could bring sufficient pressure to bear on General Lossow and the regular forces stationed in Bavaria to induce them to join in a march on Berlin and overthrow the republic. Throughout the summer and autumn of 1923 they conspired to this end.

By the morning of 9 November the conspirators were near despair; from the army and police they had

received no support save the sympathy of a minority of junior officers, the general populace were largely indifferent to the "national revolution", and von Kahr had cannily removed his government to Regensburg. Ludendorff put forward a plan that he hoped would save the day; led by himself, the fighting men of the Struggle League would march into the centre of the city, trusting that his reputation and personal presence would generate sufficient emotion to bring the army over to him.

Just after noon a straggling column of 3,000 or so armed men approached the War Ministry, already occupied by Rohm and the Reichskriegsflagge but surrounded by a cordon of regular soldiers. At their head flew the swastika and the flag of Bund Oberland, beneath them marched Ludendorff, Hitler, leading members of the Struggle League and Julius Streicher, who had brought the strong Nuremberg section of the (Thulist) German Socialist Party over to Hitler in the summer of the preceding year.

But the narrow street that led to the Odeonsplatz and the War Ministry was blocked by a detachment of armed police. "Surrender, surrender," called out Hitler, but the police line remained unbroken. Someone, probably Streicher, possibly Hitler, fired a revolver shot. In return the police fired a volley and sixteen putschists fell dead or dying to the ground. Ludendorff and his adjutant, hardly the men to flinch under fire, continued marching and proceeded into the Odeonsplatz.

Within a few days almost all those who had led the attempted putsch were either under arrest or had fled over the Austrian border, the 'Beobachter' had been suppressed, the Nazi Party had been declared illegal in Bavaria, and the SA and its allied fighting formations had been dissolved.

In 1933, shortly after the Nazi seizure of power, von Sebottendorff had returned to Bavaria from Turkey, where he had been living since 1923, and published 'Bevor Hitler kam', a book largely concerned with the Thule Society, its influence on the infant National Socialist movement, and - most emphasized of all - the importance of von Sebottendorff's own activities in the period 1918-20.

At around the time of the publication of this book von Sebottendorff revived the Thule Society and gave public lectures at which he revealed a good deal too much for his own good about the occult connections of Hitler and other Nazi leaders.

At the time the Nazis had not yet managed to obtain the absolute control of all aspects of German life that they were to achieve a year or two later but, even so, von Sebottendorff's blatant publicizing of the activities of himself and other Thulists could not be tolerated. The second and enlarged edition of

Sebottendorff's book was suppressed, all copies of the first edition of the book and of Sebottendorff's autobiographical novel 'The Rosicrucian Talisman' that could be traced were destroyed, the Thule Society was dissolved and former membership of both it and of the German Order was proclaimed a disqualification for office holding in the Party. Sebottendorff was himself arrested but, a few weeks before the purge of 30 June, was released on condition that he left Germany for good and promised to make no further mention of the occult affiliations of the Nazi leadership.

All members of the SS were obliged to participate in the neo-pagan ceremonies of a specifically SS religion devised by Himmler and clearly derived from his interest in occultism and the worship of Wotan.

At the time of the Munich putsch he was immersed in some serious political or military study, but was reading a popular occult omnibus devoted to such subjects as astrology, spiritualism and mesmerism. At this time he had so totally abandoned the Catholic faith that he regarded himself as a spiritualist - Carl du Prel's 'Spiritualism' was on his reading list and he commented upon it: "a scientific little book with a philosophical basis that makes me really believe in Spiritualism."

He believed that he himself was the reincarnation of Heinrich the Fowler (875-936), the monarch who had founded the Saxon royal house, had driven the Poles eastward, and whose memory he held in peculiar veneration. On the thousandth anniversary of Heinrich's death he swore an oath to continue the king's "civilizing mission in the east" and each year thereafter he spent some time in silent meditation before the dead monarch's tomb which, so he said, was "a sacred spot to which we Germans make pilgrimage".

The particular form of the theory of reincarnation to which he gave his assent was that advocated by Karl Eckhart, who argued that each man was reborn in the body of one of his descendants, that we are all, in a sense, our own ancestors. This doctrine was, so Eckhart claimed in his book 'Temporal Immortality', the ancient belief of all the Teutonic tribes. Himmler was so impressed by Eckhart's teachings that in 1937 he ordered 20,000 copies of 'Temporal Immortality' for the use of the SS. The order had to be cancelled, however, apparently because of political pressures exerted upon Himmler by those leading members of the Nazi Party who desired, largely for tactical reasons, to remain upon reasonably good terms with those Lutheran and Catholic Christians who were beginning to be worried by persistent rumours that Himmler had ambitions to don the mantle of Grand Master of German occultism.

Himmler's neo-paganism was in direct line of descent from Guido von List and the Germanic religious

sects founded by their disciples. There had been many such sects of which the most notable, both in terms of numbers and in the influence which its festivals seem to have exerted upon Himmler when he devised his SS religion, was the Germanic Belief Fellowship which had come into existence in about 1913 as the result of a fusion between two earlier organizations, the Wotan Society and the Community for Germanic Beliefs, and was led by a certain Professor Fahrenkrog - a man who, like Guido von List, wanted to build a cathedral dedicated to Wotan. Members of this organization celebrated religious festivals dedicated to such unlikely objects of veneration as Thor's hammer, and held Nordic weddings, funerals, and baptisms. A description of such a baptism ceremony has survived; its culminating point was the child being taken into its father's arms, sprinkled with water, and told to "make all that is un-German alien to you."

Himmler adapted his SS festivals from those of the Nordic pagans; just as the latter had made midsummer one of the high points of their calendar, so did Himmler, who desired it to take the place of Christmas as far as the members of the SS and their families were concerned. Each year "midsummer presents", especially manufactured at the SS-owned factory situated at Allach in Bavaria, were sent by Himmler to his men. Alas, however, with typical feminine obstinacy their wives continued to celebrate Christmas and to be apathetic about Himmler's introduction of religious ceremonies designed to take the place of Christian marriage, baptism and funerals. For all these latter ceremonies the local SS leader acted as a priest. At, for example, the marriage ceremony the happy couple first exchanged vows and rings, and then received bread and salt from the local SS leader. A similar rite replaced Christian baptism, with the child receiving, not bread and salt, but a gift from Himmler. Thus the first child of an SS marriage received a silver-plated mug and the fourth child of such a marriage a silver candlestick inscribed with the meaningful words: "You are but a link in the endless chain of the (SS) clan."

Himmler's attitude to marriage and childbirth was essentially a pagan one; polygamy he considered a desirable institution for the SS. On 3 May 1943 he said:

"Marriage as it is today is the work of the Roman Catholic Church. Our present marriage laws are absolutely immoral. The marriage laws of today in fact lead to a decrease in the size of families. After the war, monogamy will cease to be enforced upon promiscuous mankind. The SS and the heroes of this war will have special privileges. They will immediately have the right to take a second wife, who shall be considered to be as legitimate as the first. The permission to have two wives will be a mark of distinction. The racially pure blood of German heroes will be transmitted to as many offspring as possible."

The SS maternity organization, the Lebensborn, was seen by Himmler as an instrument in his struggle for

the purification of the German blood.

"Every unmarried woman of thirty or over (said Himmler) will be required to report to the Lebensborn and put herself at their disposal, to be made pregnant. If she resists this order she will be punished as an enemy of the people. The SS will constitute themselves godparents to the children and the organization will provide funds for their education."

The physical centre of Himmler's SS paganism was the castle of Wewelsburg, situated near the town of Padersborn in Westphalia. According to a story circulating amongst some SS men Himmler purchased this castle with the intention of transforming it into an SS fortress which would withstand a great barbarian invasion from the east.

At the Nuremberg trial of Wolfram Sievers, eventually condemned to death for his participation in the direction of Dachau, much evidence was given regarding the activities of SS officers attached to the Ahnenerbe. The origins of this sinister SS department must be sought on the crazier fringe of German occultism - in, to be precise, the Nordic Atlantis beliefs of a certain Hermann Wirth.

In the Weimar period several German occult writers combined this theory with both the Atlantis of Madame Blavatsky and Theosophical "historians" and Nordic racialism. The oddest literary effort of this sort was 'Atlantis; die Urheimat der Arier', published by K.G. Zschaetich in 1922. This not only situated Atlantis in arctic latitudes - the Atlanteans were, of course, blond, blue-eyed Nordics - but employed the mysterious faculty of "race memory" to give a detailed account of the cataclysmic destruction of the island continent. This had resulted from Earth's collision with a comet; the only survivors had been a certain Herr Wotan (the original, of course, of the deity of the same name), his pregnant sister, and his daughter. Wotan's sister died in childbirth. Fortunately, the infant was fed by an obliging she-wolf and from this event originated the story of Romulus and Remus. If Wotan's wolf-suckled nephew had chosen to marry his cousin all would have been well and Aryan humanity would have conquered the universe. Unfortunately he chose to copulate with inferior racial elements.

Wirth's interpretation of ancient symbolism led him to believe in the former existence of a sunken continent situated in what is now the Arctic Ocean. This continent, said Wirth, was identical with Plato's Atlantis but for the sake of clarity it was better to refer to it by the name of Thule, a legendary far northern island.

Thule had enjoyed an advanced, although non-metallic, culture which had flourished in the period 25,000-12,000 BC. Its inhabitants had evolved a monotheistic religion which their migrations had spread all over the world, even to the southern hemisphere, for the Polynesians are the descendants of a mixed race which resulted from the intermarriage of Thuleans with the aboriginal inhabitants of the Pacific islands. In the same way both the Nordic peoples of Europe and the Red Indian tribes of North America had come into existence as a product of cross-breeding between Thuleans and various less-evolved varieties of mankind. The last representatives of the original Thulean strain had been degenerate, but still biologically admirable Sadlermiut Eskimos, now extinct.

In 1935 Himmler established the Ahnenerbe as a new department of the SS with Wirth as its chief. It is significant that this acquaintanceship had arisen out of an introduction made by Johann von Leers, an anti-Semitic occultist who devoted most of his long life to vain attempts to revive the worship of Apollo - as late as the 1950s he was publishing from Cairo an occult newsletter which combined denunciation of "Judah" in general (and the State of Israel in particular) with a sun-worshipping mysticism.

In the early years of the Ahnenerbe the eccentric scholars who staffed it were largely concerned with such harmless pursuits as examining honey and royal jelly in order to discover which varieties were particularly suitable for Nordic consumption (Himmler actually seems to have desired the introduction into Germany of an Aryan strain of bees from the Himalayas), evolving unlikely theories about German pre-history, and attempting to abstract some sort of sense out of the many conflicting systems of mystical rune interpretation.

Himmler was obsessed with runes; he adopted the double Sig rune (ꝚꝚ) as the symbol of the SS and all recruits to the General SS were subjected to lectures on runic theory; and right up to May 1945 a large Ahnenerbe department devoted its energies to runic exegesis.

In late May 1944 [Wilhelm] Wulff was invited to lunch by Himmler. The lunch was enlivened by an extraordinary dissertation by Himmler on, of all things, the Artha Sastra, an ancient Hindu political manual which he considered "quite perfect".

- FRANCIS KING, 'SATAN & SWASTIKA: THE OCCULT & THE NAZI PARTY'

The French occult revival as a precursor to Nazism

Fabre d'Olivet (1767-1825) began his public life as a revolutionary playwright and politician, was a member of the Jacobin Club, as late as 1800 was on the fringes of a republican conspiracy to explode a mine beneath Napoleon's coach, and ended it as a dreamer of occult pseudo-history. His first venture in this line, an account of the destruction of the legendary lost continent of Atlantis, was included in his *Letters to Sophie on History* (1800). He followed up this trial effort with *The Hebraic Language Restored* in which he asserted that Moses was "an initiate of the Mysteries of Memphis" and gave a mystical translation of the first ten chapters of the Book of Genesis. In his *Philosophical History of the Human Race*, which appeared in 1824 and covered 12,000 years of history – a period which seemed breathtakingly long, for it was still generally believed that God had created the world circa 4000 BC – he asserted that the White race was both the highest type of humanity and the youngest. It had come into existence somewhere near the North Pole and had overthrown such inferior races as the Black and the remnant of the Red, most of whom had been drowned at the time of the sinking of Atlantis. The Whites had been led by a "Druid" – [i.e.](#) a Priest-King – named Ram who had been the real creator of modern civilization, the inventor of a cure for elephantiasis, previously the scourge of the Whites, and the founder of an Empire that had survived until 1200 BC.

Ram reappeared in the writings of a marquis named Joseph Alexandre Saint-Yves d'Alveydre (1842-1909) – not surprisingly, since the Marquis incorporated large extracts from the unpublished writings of Fabre d'Olivet into his own works. Saint-Yves's opinions and assertions of fact were of such eccentricity that they bordered on madness – indeed, his father said of him that "of all the lunatics I have known my son is the most dangerous". He not only totally accepted the racist fantasies of Fabre d'Olivet, but added to them the existence of the "underground city of Agartha". Saint-Yves was the inventor a new social / political system called synarchy.

Both synarchy and the ubiquitous Ram were featured in the books of the occultists Gerard Encausse and Edouard Schure. The latter, whose book *The Great Initiates* was an occult best seller, reprinted eighty-four times between 1889 and 1925, became an associate of the Austrian thaumaturge Rudolf Steiner who seems to have incorporated a good deal of Saint-Yves's theories into his own version of occultism.

Steiner must have been particularly impressed by synarchy, for his supposedly original political ideas, which attracted a certain amount of interest in the Germany of the 1920s, were neither more nor less than synarchy clad in German dress. Even at the present day there are those who believe that Europe's only hope of future wellbeing lies in the adoption of the social principles advocated in Steiner's *Threefold Commonwealth*.

Like synarchy, belief in the racial importance of the priest-king Ram has survived in contemporary occultism. He has become the Manu Rama and was, according to the late Dion Fortune, "the great Leader of the Aryan Race"; Manus, she adds, are "ethnological leaders on the Inner Planes of the great Root Races". Neither Dion Fortune nor her immediate followers seem to have had any doubts about either the superiority of Aryan man or the existence of a "Curse of the Jews". She remarked that "the White Race contains the most evolved – the Aryan" and added that the "Jewish section of the

Atlantean-Semitic Root Race” brought the “Archetype of the Messiah to the West without themselves being fitted to use it. This is the curse of the Jews”.

Dion Fortune’s “Manu Rama” and her complex system of Root Races, such as “the Atlantean-Semitic”, were not derived directly from either Fabre d’Olivet or Saint-Yves. She took them from Madame Blavatsky, whose own system, allegedly given to her by Himalayan supermen called Mahatmas, was the most complex and influential of them all. The Theosophical racial doctrines have been absorbed into the general body of Western occultism; they can be found reflected in the writings of such magicians as Aleister Crowley, in the lectures of Rudolf Steiner – who developed them to even more extraordinary lengths – and in the supposedly scientific theories of Edgar Daque, which were regarded favourably by Adolf Hitler. Evolutionary racism serves a purpose and in the right circumstances it can quieten a conscience, as it probably did for Otto Ohlendorf, the Theosophist who commanded one of the extermination squads of the SS and, in just six months, murdered 92,000 people.

The concept of the existence of superior and inferior races is not the only thing which occultism and some varieties of fascism have in common with one another. They share a belief in the importance of keeping certain knowledge a secret from ordinary people. “An impenetrable veil of secrecy”, wrote Blavatsky, “was thrown over the occult and religious mysteries...lest they should be shared by the unworthy and so desecrated”. Elsewhere she stated that the knowledge of practical occultism must be kept secret from the crowd because it may be used to control others. Darre, Hitler’s Agricultural Minister and an advocate of a blood-and-soil peasant mysticism, expressed much the same idea; “it is not”, he said, “until knowledge recovers its character of secret science and is again no longer available to all, that it can again exercise its normal function, the means of ruling human and non-human nature”.

A brief bio of Houston Stewart Chamberlain

Houston Stewart Chamberlain, whose *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (1899) had been written – or so its author said – under the influence of demons, exerted an important influence upon the volkisch occultists and the esoteric sects to which they belonged. An English admiral’s son, he had been born in Southport in 1855. His education, mostly abroad, had included history and almost all the natural sciences, from geology to biology – in the 1860s and 1870s such a wide range was still possible.

Whether Chamberlain actually believed in the objective existence of the demons who inspired him, or whether he was merely engaging in a whimsical personalization of the elements erupting out of his own Unconscious, is unclear, but in either case their effects seem to have been spectacular enough.

Houston Stewart Chamberlain [wrote William L. Shirer] was given to seeing demons who, by his own account, drove him relentlessly to seek new fields of study. Once in 1896, when he was returning from Italy, the presence of a dream became so forceful that he got off the train at Gardone, shut himself up in a hotel room for eight days and wrote feverishly on a biological thesis until he had the germ of the theme that would dominate all his later works: race and history. Since he felt himself goaded on by demons, his books were written in the grip of a terrible fever, a veritable trance, a state of self-induced

intoxication so that he was often unable to recognize them as his own work.

Chamberlain's racialism – he believed that the “German mind must guide the Aryan peoples to racial supremacy and world domination” – unquestionably owed much to that of Gobineau (1816-82), the French author of the *Essay on the Inequality of the Races of Man*, a book which deeply influenced Wagner, who conducted a long and friendly correspondence with its author. Chamberlain shared Gobineau's belief that “all civilization flows from the white race” and that even the white race was degenerate, that there is “no true civilization among European nations in cases in which the Aryan branches have not dominated it”. Chamberlain, however, went even further than Gobineau, claiming that every great event in European history, even the Renaissance, was the alone-and-unaided achievement of Teutons. He wrote:

All those who from the sixth century onwards appear as genuine shapers of the destiny of man belong to the Teutonic race. The great Italians of the Renaissance were all born either in the north, saturated in Lombardic Gothic and Frankish blood, or in the extreme Germanic-Hellenic south.

Chamberlain was, inevitably, anti-Semitic. He admired the Orthodox Jews for their supposed racial purity, but believed that this “pure Jewish race” was the enemy of Teutonic man, planning to employ its side branches – people of mixed Jewish and Gentile origin – to “infect the Indo-Europeans with Jewish blood”. Such a prospect horrified Chamberlain. He wrote:

If that were to go on for a few centuries there would be in Europe only one single people of pure race, that of the Jews; all the rest would be a herd of pseudo-Hebraic mestizos, a people beyond all doubt degenerate physically, mentally, and morally.

Problems associated with religion and mysticism were of particular interest to Chamberlain who certainly had read a great deal of Theosophical and other occult literature. Mysticism was seen by Chamberlain as the supreme expression of the Aryan spirit: “every mystic is, whether he will or not, a born anti-Semite”. He was a particular admirer of Meister Eckhart, a mediaeval German mystic whose writings were to exert a major influence upon Alfred Rosenberg, the leading Nazi theoretician, and of Jacob Behmen, a seventeenth-century figure whose alchemical symbolism and suspect theology were much disliked by orthodox Lutherans.

Chamberlain was convinced that Christianity was a totally unsuitable religion for Germany, but was doubtful whether mysticism could serve as an altogether satisfactory substitute for it. What was needed, he felt, was a totally new religion with a new god. “In the want of a true religion,” he said, “that has sprung from, and is compatible with, our own individuality, I see the greatest danger for the Teuton. The German stands apart and waits for a god to descend from heaven”.

For some years Chamberlain thought that the desired divinity might prove to be Kaiser Wilhelm, the German Emperor, but by 1923 he had transferred his hopes to a new candidate, Adolf Hitler, to whom he wrote:

You have mighty things to do. Nothing can be done as long as the Parliamentary system rules; God knows that the Germans have no spark of talent for this system. Its prevalence I regard as the greatest misfortune, for it can only lead again and again into a morass and bring to naught all plans for restoring the Fatherland and lifting it up. My faith in the Germans had never wavered for a moment, but my hope, I must own, had sunk to a low ebb. At one stroke you have transformed the state of my soul. That in the hour of her deepest need Germany has given birth to a Hitler proves her vitality, as do the influences emanating from him, for these two things, personality and influence, go together. May God protect you!

Hitler returned Chamberlain's regard, venerating the sexagenarian sage as a forerunner of National-Socialism.

The future Fuhrer was by no means the only Austrian to find inspiration in Chamberlain's writings. They were hailed with enthusiasm by, on the one hand, German-speaking intellectuals who had become worried by the increasing Jewish presence in the professions, notably medicine, and, on the other hand, by a small but growing circle of racist occultists of whom the most important were Guido von List, the real father of volkisch occultism, and Lanz von Liebenfels, the man whose death had been so regretted by the Swiss magicians of the Abbey of Thelema.